

Torah Portion Chol Hamo-eid Sukkot

Shabbat beginning October 14, 2022

This week's Torah portion is one of the more difficult for modern thinkers. When Moses begs God to "Let me behold your presence," the Torah gives its most anthropomorphic depiction of God anywhere. Many commentators focus instead on another sentence giving the more abstract *thirteen attributes of God*: "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin—yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generation."

On reformjudaism.org, in contrast, Rabbi Jacqueline Mates-Muchin had a third focus, which she gleaned from the commandment to observe "The Feast of Ingathering," also known as Sukkot, our Jewish precursor to Thanksgiving. In Deuteronomy we are even commanded to enjoy it. She argues, though it is hard for us to intend joy, the commandment means we should show gratitude. Surely the ancients were grateful for the harvest. The bible tells us, and Rabbi Mates-Muchin reminds us, gratitude brings joy. During Sukkot we can practice feeling and showing gratitude for anything. Our observances help us sustain them in new circumstances throughout the year. Gratitude signifies wisdom and wisdom brings joy.